Paragraph types: Compare and/or contrast

A **compare and/or contrast** paragraph is required if you are asked to examine similarities and/or differences. **Compare** focuses on similarities. **Contrast** focuses on differences.

Topic sentence identifies the topic and the intention to compare and/or contrast X and Y; comments on the degree of similarity or difference.

Support Sentences describe and compare features of chosen topics.

PLAN A	PLAN B
Feature 1 — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences *Feature 2* — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences. *Feature n* — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences.	Describe X — features 1–n Describe Y — features 1–n Describe and discuss points of similarity and/or difference.

Concluding Sentence summarises and interprets differences and similarities.

Useful transitional words and phrases

For comparison

similar to, similarly, in the same way, like, equally, again, also, too, each of, just as . . . so,

For contrast

in contrast, on the other hand, different from, whereas, while, unlike, however, but, although, however, conversely, yet, unlike

Examples of questions requiring a compare and/or contrast paragraph

- Compare and contrast the grain characteristics which determine quality in wheat and barley.
- What characteristics distinguish plants from animals?
- What is the difference between allopathy and homeopathy?

Notice that the words **compare and/or contrast** do not always appear in the question.



Sample paragraph 1 *(using Plan A)*

What characteristics distinguish plants from animals?

PLAN A	Compare and contrast feature by feature
Feature 1 — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences →	*Feature 1* — describe sources of food for plants then for animals
Feature 2 — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences. →	*Feature 2* — describe movement of plants and then of animals=
Feature n — Describe X, describe Y — identify similarities and differences. →	*Feature 3* — external appearance of plants then of animals

There are several characteristics which distinguish plants from animals. Green plants are able to manufacture their own food from substances in the environment. This process is known as photosynthesis. **In contrast,** animals, including man, get their food either directly from plants or indirectly by eating animals which have eaten plants. Plants are generally stationary. Animals, **on the other hand,** can usually move about. In external appearance, plants are usually green. They grow in a branching fashion at their extremities, and their growth continues throughout their lives. Animals, **however**, are very diverse in their external appearance. Their growth pattern is not limited to their extremities. It is evenly distributed and only occurs in a definite time period. Therefore, the differences between plants and animals is quite significant.

Sample paragraph 2 *(using Plan B)*

What is the difference between *allopathy* and *homeopathy*?

PLAN B	Describe all of the features then discuss
Describe X — features 1–n →	*Feature 1* — describe all of the features of allopathy
Describe Y — features 1–n →	*Feature 2* — describe all of the features of homepathy
Describe and discuss points of similarity and/or difference. →	*Summarise*

Allopathy and homeopathy are quite different. Allopathy is the treatment of disease of one kind by exciting a disease of another kind or in another part. It is sometimes incorrectly used as a name for orthodox medicine or Western medicine. Homeopathy, **in contrast**, is a system of medicine based on the treatment of a given disease by administering small quantities of a drug which produces the symptoms of that disease in a healthy person. The treatment of illnesses, then, would be markedly dissimilar because the underlying beliefs are strongly differentiated.